

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3014

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 17187

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF PANCHAYAT--ELECTIONS IN GUJARAT AND THE PUNJAB

REF: NEW DELHI 17186

1. REFTTEL CONTAINS BOMBAY CONGEN'S ANALYSIS OF RECENT CONGRESS VICTORY IN PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS IN GUJARAT. DURING DECEMBER, THE CONGRESS ALSO DID WELL IN INDIRECT ELECTIONS TO BLOCK AND DISTRICT LEVEL PANCHAYATS IN THE PUNJAB.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONGRESS VICTORIES SHOULD NOT BE OVERDRAWN. WE HAVE REPORTED THAT THE EMERGENCY HAS HAD LITTLE OR NO IMPACT IN RURAL AREAS. THIS HOLD TRUE WITH RESPECT TO THE PREDOMINANT POSITION THE CONGRESS PARTY ENJOYS IN RURAL INDIA AS A RESULT OF CASTE, PATRONGAGE, MONEY AND ITS "PROGRESSIVE" IMAGE VIS-A-VIS THE RURAL POOR. THE GUJARAT AND PUNJAB LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS SIGNIFY MORE A MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO THAN A SWING TO CONGRESS. INDEED, IN GUJARAT, THE CONGRESS LOST TWO DISTRICT PANCHAYATS THAT IF FORMERLY CONTROLLED. THE VILLAGE PANCHAYATS THAT VOTED IN THE PUNJAB WERE ELECTED IN 1972.

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3. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH RECENT METROPOLITAN ELECTIONS IN GUJARAT

INDICATED THE URBAN VOTER IS DISENCHANTED WITH CONGRESS, THE
GUJARAT AND PUNJAB PANCHAYATS ELECTION RESULTS INDICATE CONGRESS
IS MAINTAINING ITS UPPER HAND IN RURAL AREAS.
SAXBE

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